

What You Need to Know about Salt and Sodium

What is the difference between salt and sodium?

Salt (table salt) is made of 40% sodium and 60% chloride. It is used as a seasoning and a preservative in foods. One teaspoon of salt contains more than 2300 milligrams of sodium.

Sodium is a mineral needed by the body to
control fluid balance,
contract muscles and
conduct nerve impulses.

Healthy kidneys keep sodium and water in balance.

Why do I need to limit my sodium intake?

Having too much salt in your diet can:

- Make you thirsty.
- Cause your body to hold onto water.
- Increase your blood pressure.
- Lead to discomfort during and after dialysis.

The taste for salt is often learned in childhood. By cutting down on salt use gradually, the taste buds have time to adjust.

How much sodium should I have in a day?

A healthy adult only needs about 500 to 1000 milligrams of sodium per day. A daily sodium intake between 1,500 and 2300 milligrams is considered safe for most people. This is less than 1 teaspoon of table salt each day from foods, drinks and seasonings. Most people eat more than this amount. Persons who are older, have diabetes, kidney disease, high blood pressure or heart disease often need to limit sodium intake even more.

Where does sodium in the diet come from?

- Ready to eat, fast foods, canned foods or packaged foods
- Salt we add to food during cooking or at meals
- Baking soda, antacids, condiments and some seasonings
- Some prescription and over-the-counter drugs

